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EDITORIAL

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Introduction to "Shaping the future using thin films and nanotechnology"

Aruna Ivaturi *\omega *\dagger and Oomman Varghese *\omega *\dagger bc*

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Thin film technology is both the predecessor and contemporary to present-day nanotechnology with a significant overlap in the functions and applications. It is one of the oldest technologies with a history of several millennia, yet affecting

the daily lives of people around the world through its presence in numerous applications linked to their routine activities. Microprocessor, the heart of a computer, is an example of such an application. Solid thin films are formed by controlled atom-by-atom deposition of materials and, therefore, it is a bottom-up technology. Typical thickness ranges from tens of microns to sub-nanometer scale (a partial monolayer of atoms), a length scale that encompasses micro, nano and quantum materials. In the low dimensional regime, thin film technology merges with nanotechnology in developing novel materials and devices with unique characteristics that could shape the future of the world with game changing technologies aimed at sustainability and improving the quality of life.

While the modern thin film technology has its roots in the development of vacuum technology in the 17th century and the scientific and industrial revolutions in the following centuries, it became a synonym for device miniaturization with the emergence of semiconductor devices in the second half of the 20th century. One of the legends who made pioneering contributions to the

^c Texas Center for Superconductivity, University of Houston, Houston, Texas 77204, USA



Aruna Ivaturi

Dr Aruna Ivaturi is a Senior Lecturer. leading theSmart Materials Research and Device Technology (SMaRDT) group at Department of Pure and Applied Chemistry, University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, UK. She is one of the founding PIs of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Sustainable Practices of Research in Energy (C-INSPRE). She is a recipient of a number of prestigious fellowships which include the EPSRC, Chancellor's, and Alexander von

Humboldt Fellowships. Her main research focus in the energy sector is the development of novel nanomaterials and devices for emerging photovoltaics and electrochemical energy storage supercapacitors. Presently she is developing the challenging field of Elastic Perovskite PV research in the UK.



Oomman Varghese

Oomman K. Varghese received his PhD from Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD), India. He conducted postdoctoral research in the University of Kentucky and the Pennsylvania State University and then worked as a Process Development Engineer in First Solar, USA. He is currently a tenured Associate Professor in the Physics Department, University of Houston, Texas. In 2011, Thomson Reuters ranked him 9th among the 'World's Top 100 Materials Scientists' in the decade

2001-2010. In 2014, 2015 and 2016, he received the title 'Highly Cited Researcher', with his name listed in Thomson Reuters' World's Most Influential Scientific Minds. He is among the top 2% of the scientists in the world per the Stanford University Report, 2020.

a Smart Materials Research and Device Technology Group, Department of Pure and Applied Chemistry, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow G1 1XL, UK. E-mail: aruna.ivaturi@strath.ac.uk

^b Nanomaterials and Devices Laboratory, Department of Physics, University of Houston, Houston, Texas 77204. USA. E-mail: okvarghese@uh.edu

Editorial

development of thin film technology during this era is Padma Shri Professor Kasturi Lal

Chopra (1933-2021). After receiving BS and

MS degrees from India, Professor Chopra

spent several years in Canada, Europe and

the United States initially as a doctoral

student and then as a scientist in research

institutions and industry. His book "Thin

Film Phenomena" is still a standard refer-

ence for the science and technology of thin

films. Later, he returned to India, and

established the Thin Film Laboratory at

the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

(IITD), India, which became a breeding

ground for many accomplished scientists,

technologists and entrepreneurs. Because

of his seminal contributions to the science

and technology of thin films and nanoma-

terials, Republic of India honoured Profes-

sor Chopra with "Padma Shri", the 4th

highest civilian award in the country. This

themed collection, established in honour of

Prof. Chopra, features peer reviewed con-

tributions from the participants of the 1st

International Conference on Thin Films and

Nanotechnology: Knowledge, Leadership and

organised by the alumni of the Thin Film

Laboratory, Department of Physics, IITD,

India to carry forward the legacy of Prof.

Chopra in motivating and nurturing

young students to become dedicated

scientists, leaders and entrepreneurs,

contributing to society via scientific dis-

coveries, the development of ground

breaking technologies, and commerciali-

zation. The ICTN-KLC 2021 meeting

brought together students, academi-

cians, scientists, technologists and entre-

preneurs working on the development

The ICTN-KLC 2021 conference was

Commercialization (ICTN-KLC 2021).

and applications of thin films and nanomaterials from laboratory to industry. In addition to scientific talks, the conference included sessions dedicated to research ethics, leadership and entrepreneurship primarily for the benefit of early career researchers.

The articles in this themed collection cover various nanomaterials and thin films applicable for a range of areas with pivotal roles in shaping the future of the world. For example, quantum dots (QD) have changed the landscape of displays and solid-state lighting. A review article in this collection takes the readers through physics of QDs, synthesis techniques, applications in light emitting diodes (LED), lasers, displays and data communications along with challenges that still need to be addressed. Similar to the role of LEDs in revolutionizing the lighting industry, fuel cells and solar cells are two technologies critical to a transition in the energy system. Solid oxide fuel cells are efficient electrochemical energy conversion devices that produce electricity directly by oxidizing fuels such as hydrogen and hydrocarbons. An article in the collection discusses development of novel nickel oxide-gadolinium doped ceria nanowires grown using a vapor-liquid-solid mechanism aiming at device miniaturization and temperature reduction. A theoretical study giving insights into light induced quasi Fermi level splitting, which is a measure of the open circuit voltage in a solar cell, in ternary blends of molecular semiconductors is also in this collection.

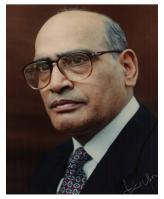
Supercapacitors are widely explored electrochemical energy

devices. A work published in the themed collection showed that, as a supercapacitor electrode, nanoscale tungsten sulphide (WS2) prepared via a singlestep hydrothermal route could perform better than stoichiometric and nonstoichiometric tungsten oxide (WO3) synthesized using the same method. In another study, nanoporous WO3 fabricated using polystyrene as an intermediate layer in the sol-gel processing showed enhanced electrochromic cycling stability for application in smart electrochromic windows for energy saving.

Nanocomposites of acid-etched g-C₃N₄ nanosheets and polyaniline nanofibers were reported to be effective in photocatalytically remediating water contaminated with textile dyes. Another study indicated that a nano-cage structure in Ag-TiO2 thin films would enable it to serve as an effective surface enhanced Raman spectroscopy substrate for ultra-trace level polluting dye detection.

Highly crystalline zinc oxide (ZnO) nanorod films fabricated using a templatefree chemical deposition method could be used as an active material for ultraviolet light detection. It was also demonstrated that selenium nanoparticles embedded between a silicon nitride blocking layer and a silicon dioxide tunnelling layer on a silicon substrate could be used as a nonvolatile electronic memory device for information storage. UV detectors and nonvolatile electronic devices find use in a number of sectors including healthcare.

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Padma Shri Prof. K. L. Chopra (1933-2021)